

Appl. No. 09/560,819
Art Unit 2879
January 21, 2004
Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2003

REMARKS

Claims 2 and 9 were previously canceled, and claims 11 and 13 are canceled herein. Claim 1 has been amended by incorporating the allowable subject matter of claim 13. Claim 14 has been added. Thus, claims 1, 3-8, 10, 12 and 14 are pending in the present application.

No new matter and no new issues are raised by the amendment to claim 1 and the addition of claim 14. This is because the amendment to claim 1 merely incorporates the allowable subject matter of claim 13. In the outstanding Office Action, claim 13 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten into independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim (which is claim 1). Thus, Applicants respectfully refer the Examiner to amended claim 1.

Further, new claim 14 has support in the present specification at page 7, line 19 to page 8, line 4, as well as in Table 1 (page 25). The added claim presents no new issues requiring further search or consideration, because a claim of the same or similar scope has previously been presented and subsequently examined (i.e., claim 13). Thus, no new matter and no new issues are raised with the present amendment.

In fact, the number of issues herein is reduced with the cancellation of claims mentioned above. Therefore, entry of the present amendment is proper, and it is respectfully requested that the present

Appl. No. 09/560,819

Art Unit 2879

January 21, 2004

Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2003

Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the Amendment automatically places the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner continues with the rejections of the present application, it is respectfully requested that the present Amendment be entered for purposes of an Appeal. The Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by reducing the number of claims and/or overcoming the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Thus, the issues on appeal would be reduced.

In view of the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw all rejections and allow the currently pending claims.

Issues Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Umemoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,979,200; hereinafter "Umemoto '200") (see starting at page 2 of the Office Action). Also, claims 4, 10 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Umemoto '200 in view of Takasu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,519,228; hereinafter "Takasu '228") (starting at page 4 of the Office Action). Further, claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Umemoto '200 in view of Doms et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,789,021; hereinafter "Doms '021") (starting

Appl. No. 09/560,819

Art Unit 2879

January 21, 2004

Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2003

at page 5 of the Office Action). These rejections respectfully are traversed to the extent deemed to apply to the claims as amended.

Applicants respectfully submit that patentable distinctions exist for the present invention over the cited references (and combinations thereof). For instance, Applicants maintain their position that each of the cited references fails to disclose thermo-compressing at least two sheets that have been separately coated and dried as instantly claimed, and that secondary references do not account for the deficiencies of the primary references. Thus, the requirement of disclosure of all claimed features for a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been satisfied. Further, unexpected results exist for the present invention.

However, these rejections are rendered moot. As mentioned above, the Office Action at page 6 states that claim 13 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten into independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim. That base claim is claim 1, wherein this independent claim now incorporates the mentioned allowable subject matter. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance, including all dependent claims thereon. Applicants also request consideration of new claim 14, whereby the cited art fails to consider the features of this claim as well.

Appl. No. 09/560,819

Art Unit 2879

January 21, 2004

Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2003

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request a declaration to that effect.

Conclusion

A full and complete response has been made to all issues as cited in the Office Action. Applicants have taken substantial steps in efforts to advance prosecution of the present application. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance issue for the present case.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Eugene T. Perez (Reg. No. 48,501) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

Appl. No. 09/560,819

Art Unit 2879

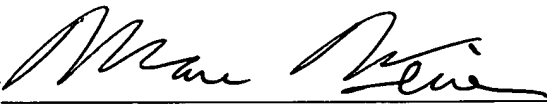
January 21, 2004

Reply to Office Action of October 21, 2003

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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